

'Where a love of learning grows'



**Birch Wood
School**



**Birch Wood
Vale School**



**Birch Wood
Autism Provision**

Social Media Policy

School Name: Birch Wood School

Policy owner: Rosalind Hopkins

Date Ratified by Chair of Governors: 2016

Review Date: April 2023

Next Review Date: January 2025

Objectives

This policy sets out Birch Wood School's policy on social networking. Social media and social networking sites play an important role in the lives of many people. We recognise that sites bring risks, but equally there are many benefits to be reaped. However, social networking activities conducted online outside work, such as blogging, involvement in social networking sites such as Facebook or Twitter and posting material, images or comments on sites such as You Tube can have a negative effect on an organisation's reputation or image. In addition, Birch Wood School has a firm commitment to safeguarding children in all aspects of its work. This policy has been written to set out the key principles and code of conduct that we expect of all members of staff governors, visitors, parent helpers and school staff at Birch Wood School. It will also provide guidance for parents with respect to their responsibilities in connection with the use of social networking sites.

Key Principles

- Everyone at Birch Wood School has a responsibility to ensure that they protect the reputation of the school, and to treat colleagues and members of the school with professionalism and respect.
- It is important to protect everyone at Birch Wood from allegations and misinterpretations which can arise from the use of social networking sites.
- Safeguarding children is a key responsibility of all members of staff and it is essential that everyone at Birch Wood School considers this and acts responsibly if they are using social networking sites out of school. Anyone working in the school either as a paid employee or volunteer must not communicate with children via social networking.
- This policy relates to social networking outside work. Blogging and accessing social networking sites at work or at home using school equipment is not permitted, unless for professional purposes and authorised by the Head Teacher.

Roles & Responsibilities

Line Managers

Head Teachers should ensure that all employees are aware of the Social Networking Policy and Procedure and of their responsibilities under it. It is the responsibility of the Head Teacher to ensure that breaches of the policy are investigated and addressed – this may include referral to the Local Authority's Safeguarding Unit.

Employees

Employees are expected to adhere to the policy and procedure and ensure that they conduct themselves in a manner that will not place children or vulnerable adults at risk, bring the School into disrepute or damage their own professional reputation.

HR Services

The HR team is available to advise and support Head Teachers on the application of the policy and procedure.

ICT Services

ICT Support (David Grimes) is available to offer technical advice and support to Head Teachers when conducting an investigation.

Trade Union or other representative

Employees have the right to be accompanied at any formal meetings. The employee may be accompanied by:

A work colleague

A Trade Union representative.

Code of Conduct: Social Networking

Under no circumstances should staff make reference to any staff member, pupil, parent or school activity/event.

It is possible that a high proportion of staff will have their own social networking site accounts. It is important for them to protect their professional reputation by ensuring that they use their personal accounts in an appropriate manner.

The following are also **not considered acceptable**

- The use of the school's name, logo, or any other published material without written prior permission from the Head Teacher. This applies to any published material including the internet or written documentation.
- The posting of any communication or images which links the school to any form of illegal conduct or which may damage the reputation of the school. This includes defamatory comments.
- The disclosure of confidential or business-sensitive information; or the disclosure of information or images that could compromise the security of the school.
- The posting of any images of employees, children, governors or anyone directly connected with the school whilst engaged in school activities.
- Staff must **never** add pupils as 'friends' into their personal accounts (including past pupils under the age of 16).
- Staff are **strongly advised** not to add parents as 'friends' into their personal accounts.
- Staff must not use social networking sites within lesson times (for personal use).
- Staff should only use social networking in a way that does not conflict with the current National Teacher's Standards.
- Staff should review and adjust their privacy settings to give them the appropriate level of privacy and confidentiality.
- Staff should read and comply with 'Guidance for Safer Working Practice for Adults who Work with Children and Young People'.
- Staff should not make any derogatory, defamatory, rude, threatening or inappropriate comments about the school, or anyone at or connected with the school.
- Use social networking sites responsibly and ensure that neither their personal nor professional reputation, nor the school's reputation is compromised by inappropriate postings.
- Are aware of the potential of on-line identity fraud and to be cautious when giving out personal information about themselves which may compromise their personal safety and security.
- Inappropriate use by staff should be referred to the Head Teacher in the first instance and may lead to disciplinary action.

C. Comments posted by parents/carers

Parents and Carers will be made aware of their responsibilities regarding their use of social networking. Methods of school communication include the prospectus, the website, newsletters, letters and verbal discussion. School policies and documents provide further information regarding appropriate channels of communication and means of resolving differences of opinion. Effective communication following principles of mutual respect is the best means of ensuring the best learning experiences for the child.

Parents must not post pictures of pupils, other than their own children, on social networking sites where these photographs have been taken at a school event.

Parents should make complaints through official school channels rather than posting them on social networking sites.

Parents should not post malicious or fictitious comments on social networking sites about any member of the school community.

Safer Online Behaviour

Some social networking sites and other web-based sites have fields in the user profile for job title etc.

If you are an employee of a school and particularly if you are a teacher, you should not put any information onto the site that could identify either your profession or the school where you work. In some circumstances this could damage the reputation of the school, the profession or the local authority.

In their own interests, staff need to be aware of the dangers of putting personal information onto social networking sites, such as addresses, home and mobile phone numbers. This will avoid the potential for children or their families or friends having access to staff outside of the school environment. It also reduces the potential for identity theft by third parties. All staff, particularly new staff, should review their social networking sites when they join the school to ensure that information available publicly about them is accurate and appropriate. This includes any photographs that may cause embarrassment to themselves and the school if they are published outside of the site.

Employees need to ensure that when they are communicating about others, even outside of work, that they give due regard to the potential for defamation of character. Making allegations on social networking sites (even in their own time and in their own homes) about other employees, children or other individuals connected with the school, or another school, or Leicestershire County Council could result in formal action being taken against them. This includes the uploading of photographs which might put the school into disrepute.

Mobile Phones/Camera/Video Recorder Usage

To ensure the safety and welfare of children in our care personal mobile phones, cameras and video recorders must not be used when children are present.

- All mobile phones must be kept in a secure place (not in a pocket), switched off and not be accessed throughout contact time with the children.
- In exceptional circumstances, which have been discussed and agreed with a member of the leadership team, staff may keep their phone switched on and accessible as long as they use their phone out of view of children, i.e. in a room designated for staff, e.g. the staff room or an office.

- During school visits mobile phones should be used away from the children and for emergency purposes only.
- Photographs or images of any children within our care may only be taken following parental consent and only using one of the school cameras / ipads. These images should remain within this setting or be shared only with the parents of the child concerned. (see **Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy**)
- Personal mobiles, cameras or video recorders cannot be used to record classroom activities. ONLY school property can be used for this.
- School photographs and recordings can only be transferred to, and stored on a school computer.

Protection of Personal Information

Staff should not give their personal e-mail addresses to children or parents. Where there is a need for communication to be sent electronically the school e-mail address should be used. Likewise staff should keep their personal phone numbers private and not use their own mobile phones to contact children or parents in a professional capacity. There will be occasions when there are social contacts between children and staff, where for example the parent and teacher are part of the same social circle or staff are transport escorts. These contacts however, will be easily recognised and openly acknowledged. Staff have a responsibility to make any such contact known to the senior leadership team.

Staff should never share their work log-ins or passwords with other people.

Staff are advised to understand who is allowed to view the content on their pages of the sites they use and how to restrict access to certain groups of people.

Cyberbullying

Birch Wood's definition of cyberbullying is **'the use of modern communication technologies to embarrass, humiliate, threaten or intimidate an individual in the attempt to gain power and control over them.'** In order to reduce the potential for cyberbullying children are not allowed to bring phones into the classroom (see mobile phone/device policy).

Prevention activities are key to ensuring that staff are protected from the potential threat of cyberbullying. All employees are reminded of the need to protect themselves from the potential threat of cyberbullying. Following the advice contained in this guidance should reduce the risk of personal information falling into the wrong hands.

If cyberbullying does take place, employees should keep records of the abuse, text, e-mails, website or instant message and should not delete texts or e-mails. Employees are advised to take screen prints of messages or web pages and be careful to record the time, date and place of the site.

Staff are encouraged to report all incidents of cyberbullying to their line manager or the Headteacher. All such incidents will be taken seriously and will be dealt with in consideration of the wishes of the person who has reported the incident. It is for the individual who is being bullied to decide whether they wish to report the actions to the police.

Link with Other Policies

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Trip and Visits Policy